

BOOMBOX

The BOOMbox is a connected learning space at Skokie Public Library designed to spark the imagination through rotating STEAM experiences. Every four months, the BOOMbox focuses on a different theme and provides the tools and inspiration for patrons to engage in self-led and class-guided experimentation and learning, both inside the space and in other library areas.

The physical BOOMbox space is a 188 ft² room with two large glass walls so patrons have a visual introduction to what happens in the space. Adjustable tables and stools allow the room to be reconfigured for different activities.

The BOOMbox mindset overflows into other library spaces including the Youth Computer Lab, the Youth Craft Room, the Computer Classroom, and the Digital Media Labs.

Creating the BOOMbox

The BOOMbox opened as a direct result of a library objective to create an experiential, interdisciplinary, rotating, museum-like STEAM learning lab with accompanying learning opportunities.

The space was envisioned to be accessible to library patrons of all ages, but particular emphasis was placed on making the space accessible and relevant to junior high school students in the village.

Focus on junior high school students was twofold:

- To bridge the technology/information gap between the junior high and high schools.
- To improve their afterschool experience.

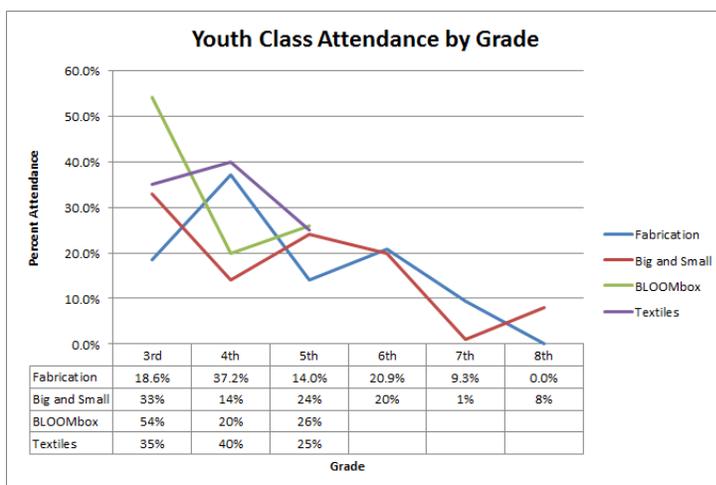
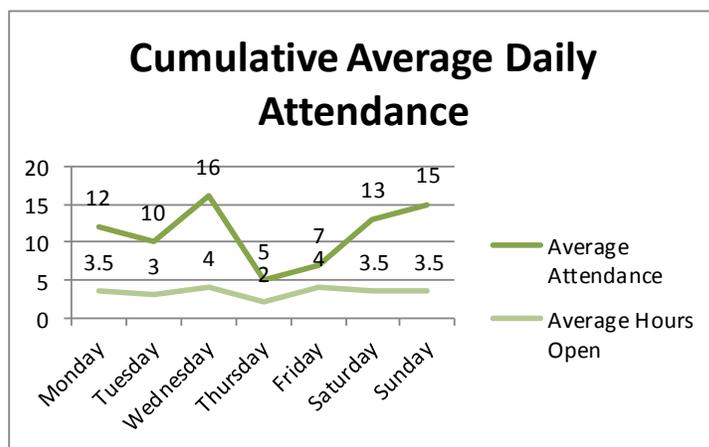
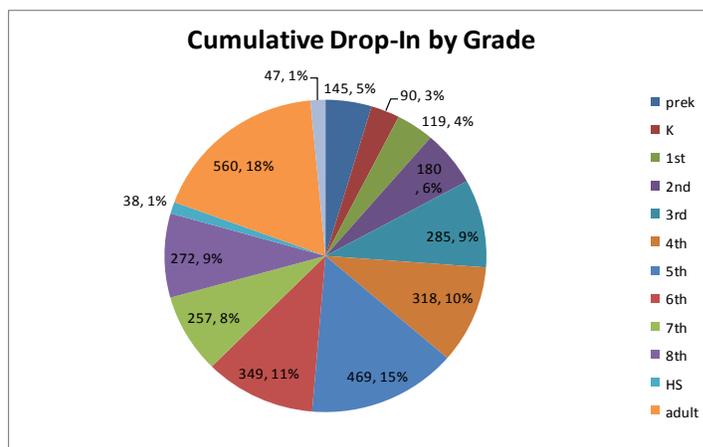
At a Glance

- 3,129 people participated in 600 hours of drop-in sessions
- 85% of drop-in participants learned a new skill
- 46% of drop-in participants gave or received help from a peer
- 1,809 people attended 151 programs
- 73% of program/class attendees learned something new

Year in Review

In its first year, the BOOMbox featured four rotations highlighting STEAM concepts and welcomed over 3,000 people to engage in self-directed, peer supported, and staff led experiential learning.

- **Fabrication** provided cutting edge tools and inspiration for rapid prototyping and making with popular makerspace equipment.
- **Big and Small** invited learners to explore the unknowns of the many macrocosms and microcosms in our diverse universe with microscopes, telescopes, civic science projects, mini computers, and many more hands on activities.
- **BLOOMbox** explored gardening and botany related concepts, focusing on smaller weekly themes with hands-on activities and outdoor learning opportunities, which encouraged learners to revisit the space regularly.
- **Textiles** provided access to sewing machines, looms, an embroidery machine, and several other supplies and materials for creative expression through making.



Learning with the BOOMbox

Drop-in hours – The BOOMbox is open 15-20 hours per week, during which time patrons can engage in mentor-led and self-directed hands-on activities designed to develop skills and knowledge and to be adapted to individual interests.

Instructional classes for grades 3-5 – Kids' classes require registration and are limited in size to facilitate maximum skill building; classes are designed and led by library staff.

Instructional classes for grades 6-8 – Junior high classes may require registration and are generally limited in size; classes are designed and led by library staff.

Instructional classes for adults – Adult classes take place both inside and out of the BOOMbox and may be led by library staff or content experts; teens may attend these classes.

Boot camps – Boot camps, generally for grades 3-5 and 6-8, focus on a key skill or aspect of a theme over the course of two or more days. Boot camps have focused on 3D printing, citizen science, and other topics connected to rotation themes.

Mission BOOMbox family programs – These challenge-style programs take place at least once per rotation and engage entire families in applying a basic skill to create something.

Adult MOOCs – By selecting a free MOOC with a subject related to the BOOMbox theme, the library is able to offer adults a deeper, mentor-led exploration of a topic usually not included in typical library programming.

Stargazer Night & other experiential learning opportunities – These events allow for multigenerational interaction with STEAM concepts, typically in out-of-the-library settings.

Find out more at skokilibrary.info/services/boombox

